Interview with Philoine H. Fried

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PHILOINE H. FRIED

Interviewed by: Morris Weisz

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Q: I'm taking advantage of Philoin[pronounced fill-o-ween] Fried's presence here for the induction of her father Sidney Hillman into the Labor Hall of Fame to record her recollections of life in the Foreign Service. First, in terms of the service of her husband, who died 22 years ago and was one of the earliest labor attach#s, who served in Paris, Prague, and Tel Aviv, successively.

She has material and can draw on her memories of what he did as labor attach#. If she has the time and is willing to, I'll ask her to tell us what she as spouse of an FSO did, because as we've found in many of our earlier interviews, a labor attach#'s or labor information officer's spouse often has a sort of informal non-governmental contacts that we like to have in the record. I will arrange that that material is given to the Spouse Oral History project.

Mrs. Fried, won't you describe how you entered the Foreign Service with your husband, the circumstances of his very early appointment, and the content of his assignment.

FRIED: We came into the labor attach# program very soon after we were married. It was through our friendship with Dan Horowitz, the first labor attach# ever appointed. Dan went

to South America, I think to Chile, and he very strongly recommended to my husband and persuaded him, a labor economist, who had been teaching as an instructor at New York University and later at Columbia completing his work for a doctorate, to apply. In 1945 Miltowas taken in under the original labor attach# program in the auxiliary Foreign Service.

We were supposed to go to Uruguay, as I recall, then considered a very fine post for quality of life, wheMilton telephoned me from Washington, where he was being processed, to say that he was very sorry, we were not going to Uruguay, we were going to have to go Paris instead. (laughter)He was appointed to be assistant labor attach#, with Dick Eldridge... This was very fortunate, he was a very interesting man.

Although Paris had been liberated in July 1944, the War wasn't officially over yet — this was before April '45 — and Milton took off in a liberty ship.The convoy of ships were bombed, so instead of anchoring off the French coast they put in for England and he found himself in London on VE-day — with no identification except his passport — which was special, not a diplomatic passport — and with no State Department affiliation to London, and no means to obtain entry into a PX or hotel. While wandering around, he bumped into a close family friend from New York who was in the Army and who took Milton in and fed him. Finally Milton got to France somehow and settled into the embassy.

Q: Do you know if he met Sam Berger, who was at the embassy then?

FRIED: Yes, Sam was there then. I keep wondering if this “new” Sam Berger is any relation?

Q: Not that I know. The older Sam Berger died some time ago, tragically, of cancer. His brother has written some material about Sam's experience and there are extensive references to him in many of the interviews that we have because of his relationship to the labor people in Britain.

FRIED: It must have been through Sam that my husband arranged to get to Paris. I don't recall how he got there; he couldn't have flown. He must have crossed the Channel by ship. Anyway, I came later, on the first ship that carried the dependents and the auxiliary people who were to have something to do in Paris, such as social workers, and the Jewish organization. I worked with them later in Prague; I remember that there were several rabbis on the ship.

It was a huge ship, either the Kungsholm or the Gripsholm, I forget which. By that time, the American prisoners of war had been released and the U.S. sent over every empty bottom from the east coast to bring them back. So there were only 100 of us on this great big steamship and they had us all in one little section. We weren't allowed to move around.

We arrived at Le Havre and anchored— there were no piers left — everything had been bombed — and we were taken off the ship by LST. I remember seeing characters in striped prison garb being directed to offload the baggage. Suddenly I realized that they were German POWs and I refused to let them put a finger on my bag! I was so emotional, it was my first encounter. The Red Cross man came up to me and said, “Mrs. Fried, if you don't let these people handle your bags, you'll just be sitting here on the wharf; you won't be going anywhere.” (she laughs)So I let them, and we were trucked over to some place where they fed us and then put us on a train to Paris.

It was a long, long journey from Le Havre to Paris. It took 18 hours. The tracks had been bombed; every two feet the trainmen had to stop and get out and inspect. Every once in a while the train would stop because the engineer had disappeared to go off into the fields. Anyway we arrived at two a.m. Milton was there with a big list of State Department people. He was given the cars to take them to various places. We were finally assigned to a little fleabag of a hotel next to the embassy on the street side. Milton discovered the next day when he went in to report that the embassy plumber had been put by mistake in our room in a lovely little hotel which was the Air Force billet on the Rue de Rivoli, and there we stayed. Milton's work at that time, of course, was under Dick. We had no social

responsibilities. It was immediate post-war time with severe rationing and a thriving black market. There were restaurants open all over the place that cost a fortune. We finally moved into our own quarters and the Army supplied us with all of our food through the commissary, so we got a ration every week.

Q: Did Milton know French?

FRIED: No. We both spent our whole time there studying French, first at Alliance Fran#aise, later at the Sorbonne, which opened up with some courses. I think he knew “school French” but his first encounter with French officials when he first tried; it was rather sad.

Q: Well, the French are notorious. They answer in English even though their English isn't good but to show you that you don't know French.

FRIED: There was very little transportation. The Metro closed at 11 p.m. but we walked all over Paris. Milton's work consisted of contacts with the Ministry of Labor and the Ministry of — and at that time the World Federation of Trade Unions met in Paris for the first time. So we had all those contacts in person — my father was there. I had no contact with Milton's work during that period.

Q: Was he covering the meetings of the WFTU [World Federation of Trade Unions], or was Dick, or both of them doing it?

FRIED: Both. As concerns Milton's doings, I had no connection with them; he went to work in the morning and came back for lunch and after work. It was more of an official nature, really. And there wasn't much going on politically, even though the country had just been liberated, because De Gaulle was there and he took over immediately, in politics and in government. So I can't tell you much about that period vis-a-vis Milton's work.

Q: At the same time as the WFTU was meeting there, of course, with all the communists who were active in the communist trade union movement in France, the AFL had a representative there. I don't know if it was Irving Brown —

FRIED: No, it wasn't Irving —

Q: Did you know about this conflict? They weren't at the WFTU meeting; they refused to join the WFTU because of differences between them. So far as you know, Milton wasn't involved in any of that?

FRIED: He wasn't, not officially, he might have met with the man, I can't remember who it was —but we spent a lot of time just having a good tim(laughing) in our free time and study. We were there a year and a half, then the Prague spot opened up and they asked Milton to take that.

Q: Before we get to Prague, one of the things we're looking into in this project is the relationship between the labor attach# and, in those few places where we had an assistant labor attach#. Have you any idea how the work was divided between them? Did he just go along with Dick, or did he have separate things?

FRIED: No, he had separate things that he did. As I said, most were those official connections with the government and the ministry. I remember he used to bring some of those people home for lunch but they were very official, the connection was never — we didn't become friends with any of them.

Q: What about the trade unions?

FRIED: With them we did have just a personal — Milton had nothing official to report on them because that was Dick's —

Q: In other words, the work was divided roughly between Dick taking the political-trade union contacts, which he was so good at, and Milton doing the contacts with —

FRIED: And if one were able to see the reports that came in, you would see it, I suppose, in that way. It changed considerably when we went to our next post.

Q: What were the circumstances of Milton's appointment to Czechoslovakia? Did he choose it, did they approach him and offer —

FRIED: A spot came open and they offered it to him. We were in Prague in September 1946.

Q: You had no children at that time?

FRIED: No. In Paris, the man at the CGT asked me if I would come in and help them. I inquired what it was and he replied that he wanted to have the Canadian papers read and interpreted. So I thought, “Canada! What's Canada here? Canada's the United States.” (she laughs) So I did. Milton asked Dick if he thought it was all right and he said if it was only for that sort of thing it was okay. After a while there were some rumbles, so I stopped. The embassy didn't like the idea of my going over there, didn't think it was a proper kind of thing for me to do. There was nothing else for the wives to do —

Q: Oh, no. We're going to get into the duty of the wives later.

FRIED: We had no social functions; we didn't have to have any cocktail parties, or lunches. Whatever we did was on our own.

Q: Very different when we arrived in Paris, in 1952. Well now, Milton was offered the job in Czechoslovakia, as labor attach#. Had he taken the exam by that time?

FRIED: No, it wasn't available until he went to Israel. He moved into the Prague job as labor attach# with a diplomatic passport. There the connections that Milton made

immediately were with the Ministry of Labor and the trade union people. There was a whole Socialist wing, and most of those people had spent the war in England. Some had gone to Moscow, others went to London.

Q: They were repatriated from London or from Moscow depending on their political orientation?

FRIED: Well, Milton discovered — it took him some time but he was very clever about it — there he walked into a full-scale job, and a most interesting one because the trade unions were there to be rehabilitated immediately; there was no problem of any kind. In France, the country was so destroyed that nothing worked, including trade unions. Anyway, Milton immediately got into the political as well as the labor scene—they were combined—and there he made lots of connections and very close friends.

Q: Was he in the political section of the embassy?

FRIED: He ended up being political reporting officer in addition to being labor attach#.

Q: With respect to his official function, what do you know of that and how did it —

FRIED: It was reporting what was going on in the various areas, first with the trade unions, then in the political; there was a great deal of ferment and a great deal of excitement. Benes, of course, when he returned was an old man. Then young Masaryk was there, and he was very active.

From a certain point on, I can't remember exactly the day or year, he had an inkling that there was something goinon underneath that wasn't on the surface of either the trade union life or thpolitical life. Not conflict, there wasn't any conflict. There were the communists, and the Socialists, and the communists had their unions, very strong ones, the industrial unions — mineworkers, steelworkers — and the other unions were the “soft goods” unions. But Czechoslovakia was an industrial country. It was working; it was a

democracy. Slovakia was sort of off at a distance, and he had not too much to do with it although he did go there several times to report what was happening. Slovakia was rural, Catholic, and during World War II, Fascist. Their ideology under democracy wasn't any different than it had been under Tisza.

Q: Did they have trade unions there at all?

FRIED: Some.

Q: Was Milton emotionally involved — oh, all this is underneath —

FRIED: He had some notion that something was going on that wasn't showing up. Before the putsch took place, one day when he came home he said to me, “We're going to throw a big party and we're going to have lots of liquor. I don't care how much food you put up, but lots of liquor.” Czechs did like to drink. At that party, there were Socialists and communists, and when they got drunk enough it turned out that there were certain particular Socialists who were very, very close friends and they were hanging onto each other but the communist[sic: missing verb here?]

That was the key Milton was looking for. There were certain Socialists who had been kind of underground communists, who had come from Russia, who were working directly with the commies but not at all on the surface; not at all, nobody saw anything.

Q: The investment in liquor paid off?

FRIED: Yes, it did. (laugher) It was the cleverest thing I've ever seen. I didn't know what he had in mind, really, and he wouldn't tell me until later. Milton was kind of envied, and criticized somewhat, by the Foreign Service people because he had all these contacts. That was where all the ferment was, all the activity; there was nothing else going on in the country: there was no longer the aristocracy that the embassy used to pal around with. You had a commercial attach# and all kinds of other people. The only other really active-

Q: Who was the ambassador then?

FRIED: Laurence Steinhardt, when we first came. To live under the Steinhardts was really something. She was the contemporary Lucrezia Borgia. I survived only because my name was Hillman, because I didn't do any of the right things, socially, as far as she was concerned. As I say, Milton had all the contacts and he became also the political reporting officer, because he knew all that going on.

Q: How many political section people were there?

FRIED: The embassy wasn't that large —

Q: Do you recall his grade at that time?

FRIED: No, but I have papers at home.

Q: I'm curious that since he was put in charge of the political sectio(Fried confirms) and may have had the experience of so many Labor people under those circumstances, — they were lower in grade, yet officers there of superior grade were not doing the sort of — (Fried agrees but says "I don't remember what that was.")

Shortly afterwards, I imagine the split between the old social democrats and the socialists and the communists took place.

FRIED: Well, there was never a split. Up to 1948, there were the social democrats, and there were the communists, and as I say, Milton was the only one who discovered this connection —

Q: But of the social democrats there were some — and I assume the trade unions had the same thing — who were genuine democrats, and there were others who were really with the communists.

FRIED: Yes. We found for example that the Czechs had never had a very strong underground during the War, and they were an occupied country, so the leadership really was the group that was split between London and Moscow. We had really close friends there, not just Czech “acquaintances.” We really had a number of very, very good friends, mostly among the Ministry of Labor people. There was Frantischek Krau[she spells it]. He committed suicide right after the putsch because first he knew he couldn't get out, and then he knew what he was going to have to live under. Walter Burger/Berger, also a Ministry person, tried to leave and was caught and put under house arrest; he died of a heart attack. His wife was divested of every possible means of living that she could have.

Q: When you say “Ministry people,” do you mean political appointees, or — ?

FRIED: No. They worked for the Ministry of Labor, I mean like our Department of Labor people. We knew some trade union people, but the trade union people didn't speak English. That was not the reason for the friendships but it just divided us. They spoke Czech, or German, which they refused to speak. After the War nobody would speak German. We knew quite a number; some economists were very close friends.

Q: Did your father visit you during this period?

FRIED: No, not in Prague. He died in '46, while I was in Paris.

Q: How did the putsch come about, and what was your relationship to it?

FRIED: I was pregnant. Our home leave was coming up, and according to both steamship and airline regulations, I would be allowed to travel only two months before or after delivery.We always liked to travel by ship anyway. They gave me permission to go home early, so I left in February, 1948. The putsch took place when we were in mid-ocean. I heard it on our daily news bulletin. Of course, I was in a tizzy. I should have realized immediately that Milton, though he was involved, was not in any danger, but I got worried.

Anyway, Mrs. Steinhardt accused Milton of knowing that the putsch was going to take place and of sending me home beforehand, thereby endangering all the other U.S. women and families.They were in no danger at all. The putsch occurred; there wasn't a Russian to be seen, all those visible were locals. On whatever date it was, they took over the radio station, the Ministry of Interior, and the Army — its leadership wasn't of the London but mostly the Moscow group.

They organized cadres of workers — all Czechs, not Russians — from all over the country, sent them into Prague in flag-bearing trucks, each man having been given a rifle. And they were just driven back and forth, back and forth through the streets. The consultations probably were with Moscow long before but Russians were nowhere on the scene. They didn't march in in tanks, as they did in '68. Later, Milton told me, all of their contacts were cut. This meant both ways: the Czechs were not permitted any contact with foreigners, and we would have harmed our friends if we contacted them. So we were cut off completely.

The baby was born and Milton came home. We spent part of the summer in the U.S., then came back to Prague. We had our own apartment. I'd be walking down the street with the baby carriage, among all the other pedestrians. Of course one could always recognize a foreigner, by his clothes, by his shoes, always some detail that showed he didn't “belong.” Pushing the carriage, I'd come even with them and instantly they'd stop talking. I'd move on and they'd resume.

So Milton's contacts were strictly official, with communists in the trade unions and with the government.

Q: Let me ask you — because other interviews, including my own, in that period devolve around it — the attitude toward the Marshall Plan. Did Milton ever discuss with you the Czechs' efforts to be included in the plan and the Russians' rejection of them? This would have been just before the putsch — the Plan was offered to all of Europe, and the Czechs expressed an interest, but the Russians turned them down.

FRIED: That I was not aware of, personally. We had four years' duty there. We lived in a privately owned apartment house belonging to people who'd rented us our earlier apartment and who now wanted to go to the States. They left before the putsch. We agreed to buy what was in the apartment, which was illegal, and to give them the money in the U.S., which, because they could take out nothing but their clothes, they would need when they got there.

His sister having left the country, the brother who now remained of the family that owned the apartment, retained his own apartment in the same house. As the owner he was very uncomfortable having us there and asked us if we could possibly move. By that time you couldn't make any move without government approval.

Q: So you had a total of four years there?

FRIED: Yes, two years before and two years after the putsch. Milton reported to the embassy that he needed an apartment; the embassy reported to the Ministry of Interior, which would put you on a list according to your ranking — and ours was low. Ambassadors were coming, charg#s were coming — but all of a sudden we were given an apartment, a very beautiful old-fashioned duplex with huge rooms that had once belonged to a beer baron.

We moved in, without furniture, we'd always lived in furnished quarters. Every evening after supper Milton was crawling all over the apartment looking for something. “What are you looking for?” “Oh,” he said, “I'll tell you when I find it.” He found the device, neatly put in the cover over the old-fashioned radiators. That was why we'd received the apartment.

We called in the embassy's security man. He looked over the apartment and said, “We'll never know where all these things are.” Tapestries covered the wall — just like the White House — and the ceilings were 12 feet high. “The only thing you can do,” he said, “is to live with the radio going constantly when you're speaking.” So that's what we did.

Milton had one friend, an economist, who insisted on coming to see us; insisted. He would sneak up the back stairs, although the janitor lived on the ground floor and must have seen everything and everybody. The visitor absolutely risked his life by coming. After a while, that stopped. A number of years ago he turned up in the States at a conference for a course he was giving, so we knew he was still alive.

On my last day I went to see one of these women- (end of tape)

(laughing) As I said, we had been cut off completely from our friends and any kind of social contact with the Czechs, though we did have official contacts. I had one interesting experience: to that party that Milton had given before the putsch he had invited a very important communist, an interesting man whom we'd have liked to know. He and Milton had kind of connected beyond a level of suspicion, and he came with his wife. So we met - she was also a pleasant woman - I think she was an academic.

One day afterwards, I was walking down Prague's main street and saw a book store I'd never noticed before, and walked in. There was this communist's wife. She was startled to see me. I was not startled to see her because you see people in a book store. When I walked ou(she laughs) I found I had walked into the communist book store — of course she was pleased to see me!

As a result, at one of the embassy functions — Milton had meanwhile reported on his meetings with this man — the ambassador asked to meet him, so he and his wife were invited to an official function. After a dinner, the men and women customarily separated. The Steinhardts lived in a beautiful mansion, one of the two Petchek mansions — the Russians had the other on— and as we separated, Mrs. Communist's wife and I sat together and just talked —

Q: In English?

FRIED: Yes, all those people spoke English very well. Later I was complimented, including by Mrs. Steinhard(she laughs) on having “made a contact.” I hadn't intended it that way at all, but viewed in the political context, I had “gone after” her as the wife of a communist. Mrs. Steinhardt complimented me on my “catch.”

Q: Was any reference made to your father's involvement — well, they knew about your father was involved — with the WFTU?

FRIED: No, there wasn't, but of course he was one of the organizers in the early days. Then came an underground message to Milton that he was going to be next on the persona non grata list. To be PNG'd is an uncomfortable business — you have to pick up and leave everything and fly out. So he went to the ambassador and had himself called home “on consultation,” which the Czechs had to recognize. We were in process of leaving anyhow —

Q: What do you mean “he got an underground message?”

FRIED: Someone got the message to Milton that he was next on the list, that they didn't like all his poking around and all the things that he was finding out —

Q: (Laughing) A compliment to what he was doing!

FRIED: So he left. packed his bag, took him to the airport and off he went. I'm not quite sure whether he left in an Air Force plane, he may have; I think it was, to Germany and then home. I was left with son Michael, about a year old. At that time we'd gotten our release from the embassy and the Ministry of Interior had instituted a regulation that any foreign person, whether diplomatic or not, who was leaving the country had to have his household goods, except for furniture, examined. The excuse was to ensure that you didn't take out any precious things. Before Milton's departure an Italian diplomat had approached

him who asked him to take out some rugs for him, that he had so many he wouldn't be able to take them all out.

By now we had another ambassador who was frightened to death of his stay in Prague. I've forgotten his name; he'd come from Rome. So I had to lay out all the goods in my house, the furniture excepted. They made an appointment and came to inspect. They told me that the baby had too many clothes but they let it go. This was the snide remark, you know, that a capitalist baby had too much —

Q: What about the rugs?

FRIED: After Milton told the Italian that he had his own diplomatic privilege, “you don't need me,” we were invited to lunch at the ambassador's one day, in this beautiful residence, as I told you, a former palace, and they lived in every corner of it, taking advantage of the whole sweep and loving it. The Italian squeezed himself into one little corner, he just couldn't “take” the whole business. Anyhow we were sitting for lunch in a room not much bigger than this one, with a lot of other people present. I discovered that the man sitting next to me was from the Italian embassy and when he asked me and I replied who I was, he suddenly whirled around and stopped talking to me, and I realized he was the man with the rugs!

So, they came and examined everything. For a Czech friend who had left the country, I was taking out a piano — it would seem unusual for lower-grade staff to be carting one around — and we had divided all her goods amongst her friends. Later on we connected with her here. She had given me a bill of sale that the piano came from Vienna. I had never opened the piano, it just sat in my foyer, which was large enough to have two big pianos in it, one having been there before we came.

The second day a different ministry macame, fortunately, who was much more sympathetic, less strictly-business than the earlier one. I gave this official the bill of sale for the piano and giving me a lovely smile he lifted up the piano lid, and there all around the

edge was stamped in gol(she laughs) the name of the Prague piano house it had come from! He put down the lid and never said another word.

Q: Well, you left then, and as is usually the case with Foreign Service wives, doing the packin(he laughs)and went home to the States?

FRIED: No. Milton was assigned to Israel. We hadn't yet had our second home leave, he'd only gone back on consultation. To mention an interesting aspect of the consultation: we were to go directly from Prague to Israel via Holland, where a very good Prague embassy friend was now stationed and would take us in for the weekend. As it turned out, we stayed there for a month because Milton hadn't yet found quarters for us in Israel. I was permitted to take 750 pounds of luggage on the plane, most of it being canned milk for the baby. This was in 1950.

Q: Was Milton the first attach# after the state of Israel was founded?

FRIED: He may have been the first. The baby and I arrived in Israel. There was a direct connection with Histadrut, where there was a young man who had made aliyah from Scotland and spoke English with a delicious Scottish burr. You may have met him when he was labor attach# here — Nat Bar Jaacov.

Q: Oh, Bar Jaacov. He and Lois—very good friends of ours!

FRIED: The first two people we had met were Nat and Lois — they weren't married yet.

Q: He was very successful here as the Israeli labor attach#. One of the last times I saw him in Israel, he was Israel's ambassador to Norway. He had a dinner for us. Wonderful man.

FRIED: One of his daughters is in Norway. I was in the house with them in Jerusalem a couple of years ago as dinner guest the night that Nat died.

The Israel phase began with a bang; there was always so much doing, always so much to keep track of — with the Histadrut, with government and politics. It was all just one big package.

Q: In this post, I imagine the fact that you were Hillman's daughter certainly helped?

FRIED: (emphatically) No, no. I tell you, Milton was the one wh(laughing) created the advantage. The only advantage I had was back in Prague, where Mrs. Steinhardt didn't dare to show her displeasure at any of my weaknesses. But otherwise Milton made his mark very soon and very clearly.

Q: Oh, I know he did. I guess your father wasn't living then, so there was never a visit from him.

FRIED: No. But both Milton and I had large family there, so we had that aspect of it also — members of our family — a large family — who are Israeli citizens.

Q: Did that affect, adversely or positively, your work in Israel?

FRIED: No, no, it didn't. Milton had tremendous capacity to overcome whatever — you know, he was the only Jew in the embassy in Israel and he had to walk — (she reflects)I wouldn't say he “had to walk a fine line” but I think what he reported was not only very honest but most likely, in his terms, what he felt.

Q: Did anybody in the embassy feel he was either too pro or too anti-Israel?

FRIED: No. As a matter of fact, after we came MacDonald left and Davis came; I think from South America, originally—a quiet kind of man. That was before Barbour (Former abmassadors to Israel.).

At the outset Milton had a tremendous influence on reporting in that whole Middle East area, during the time of the terrible terrorist attacks from way back. During our tour the

Arabs had shot up a whole village; they were crossing the borders all the time, creating terrible trouble.

Q: Did you have ready access to Jerusalem?

FRIED: We did have access to Jewish Jerusalem. That was the only time that we found ourselves a little bit — I wouldn't say hampered, but the embassy didn't like people going to Jerusalem too much. What did happen was that most of the embassy people every single weekend would go through the Mandelbaum Gate to east Jerusalem and spend their weekend in Arab Jerusalem. But we never did.

Q: Because you didn't want to?

FRIED: We didn't want to show that we were in any way having anything to do with the Arabs personally. What Milton reported was something else. But during those attacks, all the reports emanating from the Middle East were circulated to all the embassies, and Milton began to review reports of the same events as reported by both Americans and Arabs. Fortunately, there were very decent military people in the embassy while we were there. There, the two sources of reports didn't mesh — the Arab side was reporting something quite different. Milton showed examples of the coverage to the ambassador and gave him quite a number to send home.

Q: Was any effort made to resolve the differences?

FRIED: It may be, I don't know, I had no idea.

Q: Go ahead.

FRIED: Milton got along very well with the ambassadors, both in Prague and in Israel. I remember that the charg#s were much more rigid at both posts.

Q: They were career people?

FRIED: Yes.

Q: The ambassadors were political appointees?

FRIED: No, they were career, too. Anyway, Milton became political reporting officer in Israel, too. Not as head of the political section, just doing the reporting, in addition to reporting as labor attach#. Again the embassy people complained that Milton had all the contacts.

One evening we invited some Histadrut people to dinner along with some of the complainers in our embassy. My mother was visiting us just then.Our house was small, the living room and dining room were one room, so after dinner you moved from the area here over to the one over here. It wasn't a very big space. Milton sort of edged the men to one side, so they could talk, and my mother, who knew the Histadrut people, joined them — and of course they stopped talking. (laughter)

So I said to her, “Ma, why don't you come and talk to the ladies?” My mother announces in her inimitable way, “I never talk only to the ladies an(she breaks into laughter) I don't intend to now!” Spoiled the purpose of the dinner.

Q: Do you feel, though, that the men in the labor movement and in politics in Israel were unwilling to have a woman join them?

FRIED: No. It was the embassy who wanted to talk aside. It was a killing pace, there was so much going on. And the social life was so mixed in with the official. You couldn't call it official because it was all part of your responsibility. We did have to do certain kinds of things.

Q: How did Milton avoid becoming involved — or did he avoid, I imagine he did — in the internal disagreements within the government political parties and the trade unions?

FRIED: He didn't. He had contacts with all of them — with the extreme left, with all of them. Not the religious parties; he knew some, he reported the religious labor people, but we didn't have any personal contacts with them.

Q: Was Milton affiliated politically in the United States — Democratic party? American Labor Party?

FRIED: No. He wasn't a member of the American Labor party. He may have been registered as a democrat, I don't remember.

Q: You spent four years there, and then —?

FRIED: Milton decided that since he had never gone into the Foreign Service for its sake, it was time to leave. He'd taken the exam in Israel, then joined the Service sort of in the middle of his service. I think he took the FS exam in order to get the rank. It made no difference to his work at all. Then he said that if he stayed, he was going to have to stay in the Service for the rest of his life; or if he stayed much longer he'd be unable to get anything done in the U.S. when he came back.

Q: Well, from my point of view I disagree with that decision, but that's how we lost a lot of good people.

FRIED: Well, we were in Israel during the McCarthy years and it was awful.

Q: That's one of the things I want to cover with you shortly. He resigned in Israel —

FRIED: No. We came back on home leave. I brought with me something that he wrote, it's so typical of Milton. In six lines, too. (sound of paper opening)Get it all in. Keep it, I have copies.

Q: He sent a letter to the Secretary of State and the Secretary of Labor. Nowadays the Secretary of State guards very carefully his supervisory relationship with the labor

attach#s, but in those days it was different. This was written in 1954. He came back and went back to the Amalgamated [American Clothing Workers of America, ACWA-CIO]?

FRIED: At the very moment that we came back, Gladys Dickerson, who'd been the research director, was no longer there, for whatever reason. Milton knew all the people there very well, not only through me but through his own contacts, and they came and asked him.

Q: How long did he remain research director?

FRIED: For 15 years.

Q: I didn't realize it was that long....Well, that was a tragic death. Let me proceed to McCarthyism. You told me you had some material on it.

FRIED: The only thing I have is a file that I want to give to you because it does no good sitting in my desk. This was the file that when Val's friends were gathering money to prove his case —

Q: Let's put on record here that Val Lorwin was in the Foreign Service and had been very active at the Washington end and would have been a logical person to succeed Dick Eldridge who'd been in Paris for years, an expert on France and French labor, accused of being one of the people on McCarthy's list. There was a big investigation (in which I was involved) and then he was cleared and quit the Foreign Service because he was so disgusted with it.

FRIED: He didn't quit, the Foreign Service had asked him to leave for the time being, and then they said “Oh now everything's OK, you can come back” and he refused to. Thank goodness.

Q: Further for the record, subsequently Val was indicted on a false accusation, and then we had to collect a total of $40,000 to defend him. Eventually he was cleared, and the

person who had written the indictment was fired as a result. But that didn't do Val any good. He became a very good professor and we lost a Foreign Service officer. Now, you say you have that material —

FRIED: Here is Attorney General Brownell's clearance letter. I'm sure that he was unhappy to have to clear him.

Q: I think that will ultimately find its way, if you don't mind, [she says she doesn't] into our files. I will tell you that Val's wife, a dear friend of ours, would prefer — I'm writing an article about it — until some of those involved are no longer here. For the time being, it's probable there'll be nothing published on it. [Fried says she cleared things with the man's widow a couple of years after his death]Thanks very much for this material.

Let me now say that I'd like to tape something, if you think it would be valuable, on what you personally did by way of your status as spouse of a labor attach# that might have been exceptional. As I gather, in France it was literally nothing.

FRIED: Right. In Prague, I helped out in the office of the Joint Distribution Committee, an organization run by Jews but which also aids many non-Jewish people as well as Jews who are troubled financially, emotionally and from discrimination — political, for example, Social Democrats. They were bringing the many, many Jewish emigrants out of the camps in Poland and Germany. Czechoslovakia had given them quasi permission by turning a blind eye to what was going on, to bring them down through Czechoslovakia to Vienna. This was before the putsch. We had a very good friend who headed the Joint office at that time in Prague, so I used to help out in the office, that's all. I didn't ask the embassy for permission, nor did I did get involved in any — I don't recall any of the other women doing anything else beyond, not their own bailiwick.

Q: Did that change when you were in Israel?

FRIED: It was something different there. CARE was sending packages to many different places - the Pioneer Women being one of the effecting groups. I knew Bebe Ittleson [she spells it], the head of that group, through my mother. They had a problem with the CARE packages because the packages — milk, powdered eggs, a big container of coffee in every box — were sent directly to children's villages, orphanages, little schools or nurseries all over Israel, instead of being sent to Tel Aviv and forwarded from there. There was no supervision — where did the coffee go?

So Bebe asked me would I please drive around in our car and provide some supervision. I circulated among the places once a month and discovered that the biggest item in contention was the coffee, because the person who opened the package took the coffee. I had then to arrange that the coffee was to be put in the kitchen for everyone to share. That was my job.

Q: Did you travel with Milton on his official business at all? It was such a small country, though —

FRIED: A couple of times, not too much. Czechoslovakia wasn't very big either and he didn't travel around there. We traveled for our own private vacations.

Q: I'm distinguishing from India where travel was a big thing and very expensive. I want to thank you very much.You'll receive a transcript of our talk.

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BIOGRAPHICAL DATA

Spouse: Milton Fried

Spouse's Position: Labor attach#; Chief, Political Section; Chief, Political/Economic Section

Spouse Entered Service: 1945Left Service: 1954You Entered Service: Same

Status: Spouse

Posts: 1945-46Paris, France 1946-50Prague, Czechoslovakia 1950-54Tel Aviv, Israel

Place/Date of birth: November 18, 1917, New York City

Maiden Name: Hillman

Parents (Name, Profession):

Sidney Hillman, President, Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America

Bessie Abramowitz Hillman, Organizer, Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America

Schools (Prep, University): BA, New York University

Profession: Housewife

Date/Place of Marriage: May 31, 1943

Positions held (Please specify Volunteer or Paid):At Post: (Volunteer)

Paris - Interpreting English language news clippings at CGT (French trade union,) with Department's disapproval

Prague - Office work at Joint Distribution Committee

Tel Aviv - Monitored distribution of CARE packages

End of interview